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Methodological issues under the Convention
Work programme on the revision of the guidelines for the review of biennial reports and national communications, including national inventory reviews, for developed country Parties

Synthesis report on the submissions from Parties of detailed views on the structure, outline and key elements, including the purpose and scope, of the review guidelines for greenhouse gas inventories for Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains a synthesis of Parties' submissions on the structure, outline, key elements, including the purpose and scope of the review, timing and reporting, and content of the review guidelines for greenhouse gas inventories for Parties included in Annex I to the Convention. It considers all of the submissions received in response to the invitation of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at its thirty-ninth session, namely submissions from Greece and the European Commission on behalf of the European Union and its member States, Japan, New Zealand, Norway and the United States of America. The secretariat has prepared this document at the request of the SBSTA as an input to a technical workshop to be held from 8 to 10 April 2014 in Bonn, Germany.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. On the basis of the recommendation of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its thirty-ninth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP), at its nineteenth session, adopted the "Guidelines for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas inventories, biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention" (hereinafter referred to as the review guidelines).[1] The annex to decision 23/CP.19 contains a placeholder for the guidelines for the review of national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (hereinafter referred to as the review guidelines for GHG inventories), to be further discussed at SBSTA 40, with a view to adopting a decision at COP 20 that will contain the already agreed review guidelines, as well as the review guidelines for GHG inventories.[2]

2. SBSTA 39 invited Parties to submit their views on the structure, outline, key elements, including the purpose and scope of the review, timing and reporting, and content of the review guidelines for GHG inventories.[3] It requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report of Parties' views and a draft of the revised review guidelines for GHG inventories[4] as input to a technical workshop to be held from 8 to 10 April 2014 in Bonn, Germany.[5]

B. Scope of the note

3. This synthesis paper is based on views submitted by five Parties: the European Union (EU), Japan, New Zealand, Norway and the United States of America. Four of these Parties proposed specific text for the review guidelines for GHG inventories (the EU, Japan, New Zealand and the United States).

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

4. The SBSTA may wish to consider the contents of this report, in particular Parties' views on the key elements of the review guidelines for GHG inventories.

II. Approach

5. Based on the views submitted by Parties, the synthesis paper is organized as follows:

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[1] Decision 23/CP.19.

[2] For clarity, a distinction is made in this document between "the review guidelines" as contained in decision 23/CP.19, and "the review guidelines for GHG inventories", which will be discussed at SBSTA 40 and SBSTA 41 and, upon agreement at COP 20, possibly be incorporated into the review guidelines.

[3] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 68. Views from Parties are available at <http://unfccc.int/documentation/submissions_from_parties/items/5901.php >.

[4] These draft revised review guidelines for GHG inventories can be found in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.4.

[5] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 68.

(a) First, views on guiding principles for GHG inventory reviews, as highlighted by Parties in their submissions, are compiled;

(b) Second, an overview of the proposed structure and outline of the review guidelines for GHG inventories is provided;

(c) Next, a synthesis of Parties' views on key elements of the GHG inventory review process and guidelines, including the purpose, frequency, stages, structure, scope, timing and focus of the review, as well as their views on reporting, is supplied. Finally, additional proposals related to the lead reviewers and expert review teams (ERTs) and enhanced use of tools is provided.

6. Where possible, options resulting from Parties' proposals are provided.

7. This synthesis paper should be read in conjunction with the draft revised review guidelines for GHG inventories, based on Parties' submissions.[6]

III. Principles

8. Since 2003, a wealth of experience has been accumulated by Parties, experts and the secretariat in conducting and carrying out the technical review of GHG inventories. There appears to be a shared view among Parties that in revising the review guidelines for GHG inventories, they should take into account their experience with the review of inventory information, as well as the need to have a cost-effective, efficient and practical review process that does not impose an excessive burden on Parties, experts or the secretariat. These principles are consistent with previous conclusions of the SBSTA.[7] Based on their experience, Parties formulated some principles in their submissions.

A. Implement the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines

9. All submissions recognized that one of the primary drivers for the updating of the review guidelines for GHG inventories is the recent adoption of the "Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part 1: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories" (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines).[8]

10. In particular, Parties' submissions noted the need to incorporate the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* (hereinafter referred to as the 2006 IPCC Guidelines).[9] In addition, one Party made specific reference to the IPCC *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands* (hereinafter referred to as the Wetlands Supplement).[10] In addition, Parties mentioned the need to include guidelines for the review of national inventory arrangements, which are not included in the current review guidelines for GHG inventories under the Convention ("Guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention"[11]).

[6] FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.4.
[7] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 69.
[8] Decision 24/CP.19.
[9] <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/index.html>.
[10] <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/wetlands/index.html>.
[11] Decision 19/CP.8, annex.

B. Enhance the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of reviews

11. The notion that the review process could be streamlined, without compromising on quality, was implicit in all submissions. One Party noted that, at some point in the future, most or all GHG inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) will be complete and transparent and will have achieved a level of accuracy that is in line with IPCC guidelines and the data available. At such a point in time, the Party asserted, it may no longer be justified to spend a large amount of resources on annually conducted inventory reviews. The Party suggested that well-planned streamlining would not jeopardize the quality and robustness of the reviews. In fact, it continued, it would focus the efforts of the ERTs and increase the time allocated to the key issues in reviews. The Party suggested that this streamlining and enhancement of the efficiency of the review processes be reflected in the review guidelines for GHG inventories.

12. Another Party noted that the review guidelines for GHG inventories themselves should be written in a way that embodies the principle already agreed to at SBSTA 38, namely that there should be only one review of the same information submitted by Parties in national communications, biennial reports and annual inventories.[12] The Party suggested that the revised review guidelines for GHG inventories should limit unnecessary duplication in the three sets guidelines for the review of information submitted by Annex I Parties – in GHG inventories, biennial reports, and national communications. It noted that the secretariat should consider other UNFCCC review processes when coordinating inventory reviews, in particular with a view to addressing the need to improve the cost-effectiveness of the review process and national circumstances.

13. Specific recommendations to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of reviews included moving to biennial reviews of the individual inventory and merging the first two stages of the review process into a single stage of standardized checks (see para. 22(b) below), to better focus the review by ERTs (see paras. 39–43 below), to streamline the presentation of information included in the annual review report (see para. 44 below) and to make better use of tools (see para. 53 below).

C. Focus on important issues

14. All Parties noted the need to better focus the approach to the review, in particular by prioritizing efforts on the most significant categories of emissions and removals. The UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines now define the notation key "NE" (not estimated) with a threshold for significance. One Party specifically noted that this principle should be reflected in the approach to the review as well. All other Parties agreed with this concept of focusing on the "key categories" or "high priority issues", and not focusing on *de minimis* issues.

D. Promote consistency

15. Based on the experience from previous review cycles, several Parties expressed the need to continue efforts to promote consistency in the review process. Specific recommendations included:

(a) Better reflect in the review guidelines for GHG inventories the quality assurance and quality control measures implemented in the previous review cycles;

[12] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/3, paragraph 91.

(b) Identify ways for reviewers to be consistent in the assessment of whether an inventory is "good enough" in terms of accuracy, transparency, completeness, consistency and comparability, in line with the 2006 IPCC Guidelines. One Party noted that enhanced training could improve this;

(c) Continue to use the lead reviewers meetings to promote consistency. One Party noted that this could help to improve consistency of the recommendations made to different Parties, as well as those made to a specific Party by different ERTs over time. Another Party suggested using the annual meeting, if necessary, to come to a collective interpretation of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines (see para. 50 below).

E. Improve the timeliness of reviews

16. With regard to the need to improve timeliness without affecting quality, two Parties suggested that the review process should strictly adhere to the rules on timing, with one also noting that the page limits for the annual review reports should be respected.[13] Another Party emphasized that the entire annual review cycle should be reviewed to identify opportunities to advance the publication of the review reports.

IV. Structure and outline of the review guidelines for greenhouse gas inventories

17. The structure and outline proposed for the draft revised review guidelines for GHG inventories included in the submissions broadly follow the structure and outline (i.e. headings) in the annex to decision 19/CP.8.

18. One Party specifically noted that the review guidelines for GHG inventories should be based on the provisions of the Convention itself and that decision 19/CP.8, informed by the experience of Parties, ERT members and the secretariat, should serve as a basis for discussions. It noted that provisions unique to the Kyoto Protocol, such as the application of adjustments under Article 5, paragraph 1, should be implemented via decisions of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and should not be merged with Convention processes.

19. While following the general outline of decision 19/CP.8, three Parties also indicated that a separate section on "identification of issues" should be added to the review guidelines for GHG inventories. Some Parties considered the annex to decision 22/CMP.1 as a good basis for drafting guidelines for the review of national inventory arrangements. On a related note, recognizing that review guidelines for reporting under the Kyoto Protocol will also be under discussion under a separate agenda item, one Party noted that review procedures should be developed taking into consideration the processes under both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol in order to increase the efficiency and functionality of the review processes.

[13] For current page limits, refer to the annex to decision 19/CP.8, paragraph 40. For page limits proposed by Parties in their submissions, please see paragraph 47 below.

V. Key elements of the review guidelines for greenhouse gas inventories

A. Purpose

20. The four Parties expressing views on the purpose or objective of the inventory review process were broadly in agreement that there are four basic goals of the review process, generally consistent with decision 19/CP.8:

(a) To ensure that the COP has adequate and reliable information on annual inventories and trends of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs not controlled by the Montreal Protocol;

(b) To provide an objective, consistent, transparent, thorough and comprehensive assessment of quantitative and qualitative GHG inventory information. Most Parties also retained the objective in the current review guidelines for GHG inventories to provide a technical assessment of the implementation of Annex I Parties' commitments under the Convention;

(c) To compare the reported information with the requirements of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, including the use of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines and, as appropriate, the Wetlands Supplement;

(d) To assist Annex I Parties in improving the quality of their GHG inventories.

B. Frequency and stages of the review process

21. All Parties expressed views on the frequency and stages of the review process. Currently, the general approach to the reviews is that Annex I Party inventories are reviewed on an annual basis, with the review consisting of the following three stages:

(a) Initial check of annual inventories (stage 1);

(b) Synthesis and assessment of annual inventories (parts I and II) (stage 2);

(c) Review of individual annual inventories (stage 3).

22. The following three options were proposed by Parties:

(a) **Option 1: annual review of individual inventory, same stages**: under this approach, the current process of annual inventory reviews, consisting of all three stages, would be retained. This approach was proposed by two Parties;

(b) **Option 2: annual review of individual inventory, with streamlined stages and modified structure**: one Party noted that the technical review of the GHG inventories of individual Parties should continue to be conducted annually. However, the Party suggested two modifications. First, stages 1 and 2 of the review process would be consolidated into a single series of standardized checks which could be combined and made public through the use of a tool (see para. 53 below). Secondly, one year the review would take place as a desk review and the next as a centralized review. The different types of review would each have a different focus, with the desk review being more streamlined, focusing on the initial checks, the synthesis and assessment, an analysis of significant recalculations and a review of whether, and if so, how, recommendations from the previous review report had been implemented. These desk and centralized reviews would be supplemented by an in-country review every eight years. If, after three annual individual technical reviews, no corrections of any inventory estimates had been triggered and if no

significant issues had been raised in the standardized checks, then the annual individual review would take place as a desk review. The periodic in-country review, every eight years, would remain as the individual review which comprehensively covers all GHG inventory materials;

(c) **Option 3: individual technical review on a biennial basis, same stages**: two Parties suggested that the individual technical review for a given Party should occur only once every two years. Both Parties suggested that the first two stages of the review (initial checks and synthesis and assessment) should happen every year and that the individual technical review should occur only every other year. One Party suggested that from 2015 the individual technical review should happen in the years in which the Party was not subject to a review of the biennial report or national communication. The other suggested that the Parties be divided in two, with each half being subject to review in alternate years in order to allow ERTs and the Party more time to focus on the tasks of the review and improve quality.

23. All Parties supporting option 2 or option 3 indicated that, under the respective approaches, the ERT may request that a Party be subject to a more in-depth review (either an in-country review or carrying out all three stages) in the following year. One Party also indicated that a Party should be able to request an in-country review.

C. Structure of reviews: desk, centralized, in-country

24. Decision 19/CP.8 provides three operational approaches for stage 3 of the technical review, namely, desk reviews, centralized reviews and in-country reviews. During a desk review, inventory information of Annex I Parties is sent to experts, who will conduct the review in their own countries. During a centralized review, the experts meet in a single location to review the inventory information of Annex I Parties. During an in-country review, experts visit an Annex I Party to review the inventory information of that Party.

25. Currently, every year approximately three quarters of Parties are reviewed via a centralized review. The remaining Parties are visited for an in-country review. Desk reviews are rarely used at present. If used, a desk review is conducted almost exclusively as a contingency scenario and only for one sector, when a reviewer is unable at the last minute to participate in the review as intended.

26. The following three options were proposed by Parties:

(a) **Option 1: same operational approaches, desk review as contingency**: two Parties suggested an approach similar to the current one. Both Parties thought that the desk review may still have some merit, including improving cost-effectiveness, efficiency and/or practicality, but one Party indicated that the desk review should happen only as a contingency to be considered by the secretariat when difficulties and resource limitations are encountered. In terms of the balance between the different types of review, one of the two Parties suggested that the in-country review occur every five years, while the second suggested once every four years because it believes that the individual inventory reviews should be biennial, alternating between a centralized review and an in-country review;

(b) **Option 2: same operational approaches but with greater reliance on desk reviews**: one Party saw a more regular and established role for desk reviews. As noted in chapter V.B, "Frequency and stages of the review process", above, the Party suggested that in one year the review would take place as a desk review and the next as a centralized review, with desk reviews only allowed if, after three years, no corrections had been triggered and no significant issues had been raised in the standardized checks for a given

Party. In terms of balance between the different types of review, as noted above, the Party indicated the in-country review would occur once every eight years;

(c) **Option 3: centralized and in-country**: one Party proposed including only centralized and in-country reviews in the review guidelines for GHG inventories, with the in-country review taking place once every eight years.

27. **Number of Parties to be reviewed during various stages of the review**: currently, according to decision 19/CP.8, in general during a centralized review up to eight GHG inventories, and during a desk review up to five GHG inventories, are supposed to be reviewed. Parties submitted views suggesting other limits, as follows:

(a) Desk reviews: Parties suggested a maximum of two to five GHG inventories being reviewed via a desk review (in the proposals where the desk review remains a contingency option or is broadly not excluded as an operational approach), to eight GHG inventories (in the case where the desk review becomes a standard part of the review process);

(b) For centralized reviews, two Parties suggested that a maximum of four GHG inventories be subject to review; one Party recommended a maximum of five. One of the Parties noted the value of considering other formats for a centralized review that would contain a larger number of sectoral experts in one team and a more targeted focus of individual experts on specific categories, but with a larger number of GHG inventories under review.

28. The presentation of the options above may be difficult to consider in isolation. In practice, there may be a relationship between the frequency of the individual inventory review (annual versus biennial), the stages of review taking place in a given year, the format of the review (desk, centralized or in-country), the emphasis placed on a given format in a given year (e.g. half of the Parties subject to desk reviews versus no desk reviews) and the number of inventories reviewed in that given format. In recognition of this, annex I presents the key elements of the individual scenarios presented by Parties.

D. Scope of the review

29. Broadly, Parties reaffirmed that the current checks and assessments carried out by the ERT and the secretariat during the review process are appropriate. As noted above, the proposed changes were more structural (two versus three stages of review, individual technical reviews on an annual versus a biennial basis, and the balance between desk, centralized and in-country reviews) and more related to the focus of the review (see paras. 39–43 below).

30. **Initial check**: for the Parties suggesting that the initial check be retained as a separate stage, the scope of the checks to be undertaken was broadly the same as that in decision 19/CP.8. Checks proposed, or considered for removal, were those that determine:

(a) Whether actual and potential emission estimates for hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6) are reported by individual chemical species (two Parties);

(b) Whether all emissions are reported without adjustments relating, for example, to climate variations or trade of electricity (two Parties);

(c) Whether emissions from fuel used in international transportation are reported separately from national totals (one Party);

(d) Whether the tables on uncertainties have been reported as required by the reporting guidelines (one Party).

31. **Synthesis and assessment, parts I and II**: the scope of the checks proposed to be undertaken in the synthesis and assessment, parts I and II, are similar to the current range of checks. The Party that suggested merging the initial checks and the synthesis and assessment, parts I and II, suggested that the full range of checks should be reviewed to ensure usefulness and that perhaps a shorter range of checks should be retained, although additional checks could also be added. They also noted the importance of conducting a periodic evaluation of the checks to ensure that they remain useful. The checks that one or more Parties suggested be removed were those that assess:

(a) Estimates of actual and potential emissions of HFCs, PFCs and SF_6 and the ratio between the actual and potential emissions (two Parties);

(b) The availability of documentation on national self-verification procedures or independent review in the technical review process, and the application of the IPCC *Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management in National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*, including uncertainties (one Party).

32. **Individual review**: for the tasks of the ERT during the individual review, only a few changes were proposed by Parties in their submissions. Specific suggestions were:

(a) A check to be added to examine national inventory arrangements for the estimation of anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks, including all institutional, legal and procedural arrangements for reporting and archiving inventory information within an Annex I Party (three Parties);

(b) A check to be added to compare the activity data of the Annex I Party with relevant external authoritative sources, if feasible, and identify categories where there are significant differences (one Party);

(c) The current check regarding recalculations to focus on recalculations that exceed 2 per cent for individual categories and 0.5 per cent of national total emissions (one Party).

33. In addition, several Parties suggested formalizing in the review guidelines for GHG inventories some of the procedures that are currently undertaken but not specifically outlined in the current review guidelines for GHG inventories, for example:

(a) Provide early feedback to Parties on the provisional issues identified during the review. One Party indicated that ERTs should endeavour to provide early feedback to the reviewed Party, prior to the review report being finalized. Although not specifically noted by the Party, this could be interpreted to be something like the current "main findings and recommendations" table provided to Parties subject to a centralized review,[14] starting in the 2013 review cycle, or the presentations of findings during the in-country reviews. Two additional Parties welcomed the idea of a specific deliverable highlighting main findings to be sent to the Party at the end of the review week;

(b) Send preliminary questions to the Party two weeks prior to the individual review stage, providing the Party with two weeks to respond (one Party);

(c) Better reflect in the review guidelines for GHG inventories the useful procedures (e.g. quality assurance) and tools that the secretariat has introduced into the process, playing an important role in the GHG inventory review (one Party).

[14] See paragraph 11 of the conclusions of the 10th meeting of inventory lead reviewers, available at <http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/review_process/application/pdf/10thlirsmeeting_conclusionsrecommendations.pdf>.

34. One Party was also of the view that existing procedures in the review of annual submissions under the Kyoto Protocol would be useful to incorporate into reviews under the Convention. Specifically, the ERT could inform a Party under review at the end of the review week whether there are any significant potential problems related to mandatory requirements in the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines (including potential overestimations or underestimations). The Party indicated that this list could provide an early overview of any identified problems, give the Party additional time to consider these issues and provide additional information, correct such problems or work on improvements for the subsequent inventory submissions. Under this proposal, there could then be a procedure similar to that in the list of potential problems and further questions raised by the ERT,[15] in terms of providing the Party with six weeks to respond with clarifications, corrections or explanations as to why the estimate is not an overestimate or underestimate. If no response is provided, the ERT would reflect the problem in the annual review report, including, if possible, a quantitative assessment of the problem.

E. Timing of the review stages

35. With respect to the timing of the initial check, of the three Parties proposing that this stage be retained as a separate stage, two agreed with the current timeline of seven weeks to finalize the status report; one Party allowed for an additional two weeks.

36. With respect to the timing of the synthesis and assessment, parts I and II, of the three Parties proposing that this be retained as a separate stage, none provided alternatives to the timelines outlined in decision 19/CP.8.

37. With respect to the timing of the individual review, three Parties preferred to retain the current timelines outlined in decision 19/CP.8 of 25 weeks for a centralized review and 14 weeks for an in-country review. A fourth Party suggested 20 weeks for a centralized review and 15 weeks for an in-country review; the Party also suggested that one additional week be granted to the Party to respond to the review report in the event a problem was identified, bringing the total review process in these cases to 21 weeks for a centralized review and 16 weeks for an in-country. The Parties wishing to retain the desk review would also generally retain the current timeline of 20 weeks for completion of the annual review report, as included in the same decision.

38. One Party also noted that, for Parties reporting and being reviewed under the Kyoto Protocol, the timeline should follow the agreed timeline for reviews under the Kyoto Protocol.

F. Focus of the review

39. According to decision 19/CP.8, ERTs should focus on areas of the inventory where problems have been identified in previous reviews or stages of a review, or where changes have been reported by the Party. In their submissions, Parties emphasized that the review should focus on:

(a) Key or significant categories (all Parties broadly);

(b) The inventory for the most recent year submitted, recalculations and recent methodological changes (one Party).

40. Several Parties also noted that issues identified during the review should be classified in terms of transparency, completeness and comparability; and consistency,

[15] Decision 22/CMP.1, annex, paragraph 74.

accuracy and adherence to the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, in accordance with decision 24/CP.19.

41. On a related note, one Party clarified the definition of completeness, specifically linking the assessment of completeness to paragraph 37(b) of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, and the need to consider whether a disproportionate amount of effort would be required to collect data for the gas from a specific category with an insignificant contribution. A second Party made a similar remark – that when making recommendations, ERTs should consider the cost–benefit ratio for the Party to implement the recommendations, taking national circumstances into account.

42. A change proposed in the submission of one Party, as compared with the current review process, reflects the notion that the focus of the review may depend on the type of operational approach to the review. Currently, there is no distinction among the types of checks to be carried out in a desk review, a centralized review, and an in-country review. The only distinctions reflected in decision 19/CP.8 are the length of the annual review report, which differs depending on the operational approach to the review and the time given to the ERT to finalize its report.

43. Accordingly, the Party proposed the following approach:

(a) **During a desk review**, the ERT shall:

(i) Follow up on the findings from standardized checks and responses from the Party under review to those findings;

(ii) Analyse any recalculations that have changed the emission/removal estimate for a category by more than 2 per cent and national total emissions by more than 0.5 per cent, as provided in the CRF tables for any of the recalculated years, and assess the reasons provided by the Party for the recalculations and improvements performed, as well as the consistency of the revised estimates with the 2006 IPCC Guidelines;

(iii) Assess the extent to which issues and questions raised in previous review reports have been addressed and resolved;

(b) **During a centralized or in-country review**, the Party noted that generally the same procedures should be followed as contained in decision 19/CP.8, but, in addition, the ERT shall also:

(i) Assess whether the national inventory arrangements are functioning and facilitating the continuous improvement of the GHG inventory;

(ii) Assess whether quality assurance and quality control procedures have been implemented;

(iii) Highlight, where applicable, areas where the Party has made efforts to implement methodologies and has used data sources that provide for inventory estimates of a high level of accuracy, transparency, consistency and completeness.

G. Reporting

44. It is stated in decision 19/CP.8 (annex, para. 39) that "review reports should contain an objective assessment of the adherence of the inventory information to the reporting guidelines and the provisions of relevant decisions by the COP and should not contain any political judgement". In their submissions, Parties made the following additional recommendations related to the structure and content of the annual review reports:

(a) The review reports should be made more concise and their contents more standardized through the use of tables and checklists (three Parties). One of the Parties further stated that findings should be inserted as text in the body of the review report only for potential issues identified and the corresponding recommendations;

(b) Classify problems in terms of transparency, accuracy, consistency, completeness and comparability (three Parties);

(c) Provide a clear means of conveying to the Party which issues are of high priority (three Parties). One Party further noted that, in making this assessment, the influence of the category on emission levels is the most important criterion;

(d) Highlight improvements for categories in which the Party has achieved an excellent status of accuracy, transparency and completeness (two Parties);

(e) Include an overall appraisal of the quality and reliability of the inventory, emission trends, actual emission factors and activity data, and on the degree of adherence to the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, the 2006 IPCC Guidelines and, if applicable, the Wetlands Supplement (one Party);

(f) Provide clearer references to the relevant provisions in the 2006 IPCC Guidelines or the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines when potential problems are raised in the review reports (one Party);

(g) Include an evaluation of the overall organization of the national inventory arrangements, including a discussion of the effectiveness and reliability of the institutional, procedural and legal arrangements for estimating GHG emissions (one Party);

(h) Avoid duplicating information already publicly available (e.g. through the common reporting format tables and national inventory report) (one Party);

(i) Standardize the language of recommendations (e.g. strong recommendation, recommendation, encouragement) (one Party);

(j) Include any corrected estimates provided by the Party during the review in response to potential problems. If the Party did not correct or otherwise address the problem, the ERT should include a quantified assessment of the level of the potential overestimation or underestimation for the individual problems and the sum of all such problems (one Party).

45. Two Parties expressed different views regarding the timing for a Party's implementation of recommendations contained in the annual review report. One Party noted that the guidelines should acknowledge that even the most efficient and timely review cannot produce the report in time for Parties to make changes for the next inventory submission because of the lengthy inventory compilation process and the time it takes to get annual review reports published. Another Party noted that recommendations should be implemented in the next inventory submission, even in cases of individual reviews that occur on a biennial basis.

46. In addition, one Party suggested that, for all types of review, the ERT produce the final version of the review report, taking into account the comments of the Annex I Party. Furthermore, the same Party suggested that all final review reports be published and forwarded by the secretariat, together with a written comment on the final review report by the Party that is the subject of the report, to the COP. In current practice, specific reactions by the Party to the review report are generally included only if there is a disagreement between the ERT and the Party in terms of an assessment.

47. Regarding the proposed length of the annual review report, for a centralized review suggestions ranged from 15 to 20 pages; for an in-country review Parties' proposed a length

of 20 to 30 pages. For the desk review, one Party suggested that the annual review report be 8 pages. It should be noted that all of these proposed lengths are shorter than recent published reports, which often range between 40 and 50 pages, but similar to the requirements in decision 19/CP.8 (10 pages for a desk or centralized review and 25 to 30 pages for an in-country review).

H. Lead reviewers and expert review teams

48. The review guidelines contained in the annex to decision 23/CP.19 provide a general section applicable to all types of review: biennial reports, national communications and GHG inventories. This section includes information on the composition of ERTs and the role of lead reviewers, ad hoc experts and the secretariat.

49. In their submissions, three Parties noted the importance of the annual lead reviewers' meeting with respect to ensuring consistency across reviews. One Party suggested that the functions and tasks of the meeting be more defined and expanded.

50. In addition to its current role in providing recommendations to support the composition of the ERTs, organizing reviews, promoting consistency across reviews and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of reviews, one Party suggested that the annual lead reviewers' meeting serve to:

(a) Identify where IPCC guidelines are not sufficiently clear, based on, in part, the secretariat's quality assurance process, and attempt to achieve a common interpretation of those guidelines;

(b) If necessary, provide an opportunity for lead reviewers to draft clarifying guidance with respect to methodological issues for consideration by the SBSTA and agreement by the Parties, thus not requiring Parties to wait for new IPCC guidelines to be drafted, accepted and adopted;

(c) Assist the secretariat in reviewing, every five years, existing standardized checks and exploring additional ones;

(d) Agree on relevant external authoritative sources of activity data that should be used for comparison with submitted data during the reviews;

(e) Discuss, agree on and develop review tools;

(f) Discuss and agree to review report templates;

(g) Discuss other options for the composition of ERTs, including a more targeted focus of individual experts on specific categories, and a larger number of countries under review.

51. The Party also suggested that the secretariat improve the documentation of the lead reviewers' meeting, including through the use of a web-based forum so that conclusions are searchable by sectors and issues.

52. One Party noted that, given the increasing demands on reviewers in terms of the types of review to be undertaken (biennial reports, national communications and GHG inventories) and additional reports to be written, the SBSTA should consider new ways of conducting the reviews, including the composition of ERTs. For example, the Party suggested that one option might be to consider sectoral teams looking at a larger number of inventories. The Party suggested that this could ensure broader expertise in the team and enhance consistency across Parties.

I. Use of tools to enhance efficiency

53. One Party noted the opportunity for tools to improve the cost-effectiveness, efficiency and practicality of the review process. Specific suggestions included:

(a) Develop and implement an efficient way of tracking responses to questions and additional information provided by Parties during reviews so that the information may be considered at subsequent reviews and repetitive questions avoided. This tool could be queried by future ERTs so that they may view the communications from earlier reviews;

(b) Communicate findings from the standardized checks to Parties through use of an online communication tool;

(c) Discuss whether the general parts covered by the initial checks and synthesis and assessment part I could be combined and made public, perhaps not in a PDF format but through use of a review tool like the GHG data locator;

(d) Use online conference tools to reduce travel costs while ensuring communication among review experts.

J. Annual report of emissions and trends of greenhouse gases

54. As part of the technical review of annual national GHG inventories, the secretariat provides aggregate information to the COP on GHG emissions and removals and their trends for all Annex I Parties. That document[16] includes a section on trends of GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks and an assessment of the adherence of the reported inventory information to the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, as well as to the provisions of relevant COP decisions, including information on any delays in submitting the annual inventory. Two Parties proposed retaining the current language used in that section. One Party indicated that the document should also contain information on the new and revised tools used in the review process, but did not include a section titled "Annual report of emissions and trends of greenhouse gases" in the draft revised review guidelines for GHG inventories included in its submission. Another Party omitted this section and did not refer to it in its submission.

VI. Conclusions

55. Parties have provided a wealth of ideas in their submissions. Although in many areas the views did not diverge significantly, in certain areas the ideas and options do appear to differ from one proposal to another. Discussions among Parties are likely to clarify where the proposals converge and where different options need to be assessed.

[16] <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/sbi/eng/19.pdf>.

Annex

Summary of key elements proposed in Party submissions

	European Union	*Japan*	*New Zealand*	*Norway*	*United States of America*
Number of stages in the review process	2 (standardized checks and individual review)	3 (initial check, S&A, individual review)	3 (initial check, S&A, individual review)	3 (initial check, S&A, individual review)	3 (initial check, S&A, individual review)
Frequency of individual review	Annual, but more streamlined every other year	Annual	Annual	Biennial for third stage of individual review	Biennial for third stage of individual review
Format of reviews	Alternate annually between DR and CR, periodic ICR	CR or ICR	DR, CR, ICR	Current distribution between CR and ICR	CR and ICR; DR remains as a contingency option
Frequency of in-country review	Every 8 years	Every 8 years	Every 5 years	Every 5 years	Every 4 years
Number of inventories reviewed, by type	DR: 8 CR: 4 (note: explore other compositions; more Parties)	Not indicated	DR: 5 CR: 4	Not indicated	DR: 2 CR: 5
Timing for completion of reports after review week	DR: 20 weeks CR: 20 weeks (21 with potential problems) ICR: 15 weeks (16 with potential problem)	DR: N/A CR: 25 weeks ICR: 14 weeks	DR: 15 weeks CR: 25 weeks ICR: 14 weeks	Not indicated	DR: 20 weeks CR: 25 weeks ICR: 14 weeks
Maximum length of report	DR: 8 CR: 25 pages ICR: 30 pages	DR: N/A CR: 15 pages ICR: 20 pages	DR: not indicated CR: 15 pages ICR: 25–30 pages	Not indicated	DR: 15 pages CR: 15 pages ICR: 25–30 pages

Abbreviations: CR = centralized review, DR = desk review, ICR = in-country review, S&A = synthesis and assessment.